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Copy of Letter of His Grace Germanos, Lord Archbishop of Amassia and Samsoun.

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The Turkish Atrocities in the Black Sea Territories.

Copy of Letter of His Grace Germanos, Lord Archbishop of Amassia and Samsoun.

Constantinople,
16/29 December, 1918.

M. CONSTANTINIDES,
President of the Pont-Euxin Unredeemed Greeks Committee.

Honorable and Dear Sir,

It was with a lively interest that I read your letter of 19/2 December, and with joy learnt from it the good news about the various organisations of our countrymen dispersed from Pontus, one of which at Marseilles is under your Presidency.

And first of all, I congratulate you, as well as those who are grouped around you, on your patriotic initiative in defence of the rights of Hellenism of Pontus, and I pray God may crown your efforts with complete success. Over those efforts presides by good fortune the new Hercules of Hellenism, to deliver Prometheus from the chains that bind him to the rocks of Caucasia.

I am setting out at once for Amissos, so as to carry out, after conferring with my parishioners and the bishops of Pontus, all that your programme and the national needs of Pontus demand.

And, as I understand by the bearer of your letter that, on account of the want of all communication, you are not informed of the state of our fellow countrymen of Pontus, I think it my duty to transmit to you, with all possible

brevity (for the steamer carrying the mails will shortly weigh anchor), a rough sketch of the great sufferings they have undergone since the outbreak of the European War.

Euxine Pontus has undergone the greatest calamities and disasters, not only from the party, at that time all-powerful, of Turkish "Union and Progress," but also from all the Turkish people. Some of them, following out a false political conception, laid the responsibility for all these disasters, for this extermination of our population, on a party, and the stranger who knows the Turk only slightly, might actually have believed in the possibility of upholding Turkish Sovereignty under another more liberal and moderate Government. This is an error. The destructions, infamies, murders, pillages, and worse, are the work of the Turkish people, who even during the regime of the pseudo-constitution showed themselves utterly incapable of liberty. They went totally bankrupt and failed before the bar of history, and by their savage instincts and criminal acts became worthy only of sentence of death from the political point of view.

The Turkish people, after having hacked to pieces a million Armenians, organised and are still organising, according to the same method, similar outrages. They were led, but only according to their own instincts, by the Government of Talaat, Enver, Djemal and their accomplices. After having drowned numberless little Armenian children in the sea and the rivers, the Turks carried off the young women and wives, putting all the men to death and then directed their attention to the fortune, honour, and life of the Greek "Raya." At last, exploiting the absence of all control and the ephemeral victories of the Central Powers, the Turks found it necessary to stamp out Hellenism in Turkey. However, as much anger had been caused in Europe and America by the Armenian massacres, and as further open atrocities could only increase the horror of the whole world, the Turkish people and Government invented a new way of extermination by assassination, less instantly shocking to moral ideas and the rules of civilisation. The Greek population had to be wiped out by deporta-

tion, hunger, cold, by privations or ill treatment. Thrace, Propontide (Marmara), the coast of the Ægean Sea, were evacuated of their Greek populations, which were deported towards the interior of Anatolia and dispersed among the Turkish villages without shelter, without clothes, dropping and dying on the way of hunger and fatigue. But it was Pontus that had to undergo the greatest trials and disasters. First of all, Sinope and the neighbourhood were evacuated. Then Ayadjik and Karza with all their villages suffered the same fate. Their inhabitants were scattered among the regions of Castamouni, but the greater number had already perished on the way as the result of fatigue and ill treatment. The dead were left without burial, and many women, in the impossibility of taking with them their children, and constantly beaten by the soldiers, abandoned them in the mountains, a prey to hunger and wild beasts. The Turks did not even spare the families of those who died in the Amela-Tabourou (forced labour battalion), nor was mercy shown to those who, like beasts of burden, laboured on military works, nor even to the families of those fallen on the battlefield. Two villages of Ayadjik (caza of Sinope), Yokari-Keuy and Sernai, to escape death fell away and embraced Islamism. All the others, after the pillage of their wealth, the confiscation of their houses and their cattle, were led away towards the farthest-off confines of the vilayet of Castamouni, where the greater part of them died of cold, hunger and cruelties.

Towards the middle of December, 1916, began the deportations from Amissos (Samsoun). First of all the army reduced to ashes all the region round about. Nearly all the villages rich in tobacco plantations, civilised, friends of progress and possessing a lively national sentiment, were first pillaged and then set on fire. A large number of women and children were killed, the young girls of the nation outraged, and immediately afterwards driven into the interior. Where? Into the vilayet of Angora to Tchoroum, to Soungourlou, and still farther. . . . The winter was of the most rigorous kind; these girls had to march 30 or 40 days across snow-covered mountains and sleep by night in the open. For several days

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they were without food, for they were not even allowed to buy bread for money; they were continually beaten by the gendarmes and stripped of any money they might have on them; and when they got to the towns they were brutally pushed into the hot public baths on the pretext of hygiene and cleanliness, and just as quickly dragged out. Thus, an easy prey to the rigours of the cold, they were driven on farther. The majority of course died on the road, and none of the dead at all being buried, vultures and dogs feasted on human flesh.

Meanwhile the expulsions went on; every day, afar off, we saw clouds of smoke, and heard the screams and cries of despair of those who were being torn from their hearths and homes without our being able to bring them the least word of consolation. They were sent directly to the place of exile and tortured, whilst our palace (the bishop's palace) was kept under strict watch by the police and Turkish soldiery. On the 24th December the greatest part of our traders were arrested and led away immediately like the lowest of criminals towards the interior, to Tchoroum, to Soungourlou, etc. On January 6th, 1917 (the day of the Epiphany), and the following days, the police commissioners tore some away from our church, others from the arms of their wives, all the merchants without exception, all the men of science, artisans, and any man of mark, and sent them one after another into the interior. At Bafra no adult male remained, all having been sent towards Castamouni; only the women and the children of the towns were left, for the male population of Charshamba, Oenoe (Uniah), and of Therme (Thermoxdon), had likewise suffered the worst, but these city women and children were left without food or protection, money or bread; every village was evacuated and burned. The whole region of Bafra suffered this fate. This destruction continued until even the lost soul of Rafet Pasha, the notorious assassin of Hellenism, at last got tired of it all.

Towards the end of the year, when the savage instincts of the tyrant and his instruments as well as the wild fanaticism of the Turkish were satisfied, I was at last able to go out

towards the mountains to discover and assemble fragments of evidence as to the catastrophe. I found only ruins and desolation; skeletons lay scattered on the mountain. I found but a very small number of women and children who, hidden in the caverns and the forests, had been able to escape the fury of the excited rabble. In the majority of the villages I was unable to discover even the ruins. The place had been burned and was now overgrown with grass. The very small number that had escaped complete destruction were void of inhabitants. Spiders had woven their webs over all, and owls flitted about mournfully hooting.

These misdeeds continued all the summer long. Then towards October a drunken and ignoble governor suddenly summoned me at the Prefecture of Police. After having locked me in his room, he said, "The carriage is below; be quick and get up, you are off to Constantinople." I asked him for a delay of at least a day to get myself ready, and only after a thousand difficulties did he promise to send me back under police escort to my palace, whence, having taken some money and clothes, I set out again, still escorted by the police. When, after having crossed the whole of Asia Minor, over mountains and amid the greatest perils, I got to Constantinople it was only to be imprisoned with the basest of criminals for the night. I was only released on the morrow as the result of an energetic complaint on the part of the Patriarchate and the intervention of influential friends. But sufferings and even death is sweet if it may contribute to the easing of the pain of one or all, and serve the interests—the sacred interests —of humanity. Unfortunately my expulsion was followed by a new series of misfortunes: Amissos (Samsoun), or rather what was left of its women and children, abandoned by their pastor, took fright and hid themselves like real culprits; and as soon as I was gone, during the months of November and December, in the depth of the severest winter the surrounding country had ever known, all the villages of Bafra without exception were evacuated. The people moved towards the middle of Anatolia, where the remainder perished, after more than a third of them had found death on the road.

The same misdeeds were repeated in the regions of Tripolis (Tirebolou), of Kerassunde, and of Kara-Hissar. At the beginning of October, 1916, a population of 25,000 souls were sent towards the region of Sevastia (Sivas), and beyond. The town of Ordou (Cotyora) was entirely destroyed as well as the surrounding region. I went to Sevastia and to Kara-Hissar during the winter of 1916, and there I saw the most tragic and heartbreaking of sights; a multitude composed of thousands and thousands of women and children, who were trudging along over the mountains and water-courses, like cattle driven to the slaughter. I tried to come to their aid at Sou-Chehir, to ease their situation at Sevastia, but that murderer of Armenians, Mouamer Bey, Prefect of Sevastia, would not even let me distribute a little money among them under the pretext of getting them used to laziness. He was merely planning thus their extermination by hunger. And of course that was what happened.

Believe me, my dear Mr. Constantinides, that out of 160,000 people of Pontus deported, only a tenth and in some places a twentieth have survived. In a village, for example, that counted 100 inhabitants, five only will ever return; the others are dead. Rare indeed are those happy villages where a tenth of the deported population has been saved.

Trebizonde has suffered less, relatively, because it happened to be in the occupation of the Russians, but after their departure many of the people of this town and surrounding villages followed them; as for those who stayed behind, they too had to stand the fury of the savage beasts.

Such is, in short, the situation in Pontus; as for the wrecks that come back to us from the catastrophe, having no means of subsistence they are predestined to death by famine, for in spite of the subscriptions we have organised at Samsoun, individual initiative is powerless to bind up such wounds. There is urgent necessity to take measures, rapid and efficacious measures, so that sufficient money may be sent, never mind whence, to construct huts and shelters, to provide bread, clothes, and other objects of first necessity.

In these conditions you can get an idea of the difficulties I shall have to get over for the working out and application of your programme, but drawing my courage from the vitality of the Greek race and from Pontic patriotism, I shall not be downhearted, and shall do all that is humanly possible, with the help of God, to accomplish my duty, both pastoral and national.

It would be good and useful for the success of our hallowed end if European public opinion were enlightened. I beg you to cry aloud, "*urbi et orbi*" these crimes of the Turks, unique in horror, saying that it is impossible to be governed by them in the future.

It is the duty of our European Allies to punish this criminal people, and give satisfaction to our national sentiment. And, if reunion with our motherland, Greece, is not possible, they still have the duty of creating a Pontic State under a democratic form of Government; for even if its population has been decimated, the parents of those perished have set themselves up for the past 50 years in Russian Caucasia, where they wait but the deliverance of their mother-country in order to come back and repeople the devastated territory of our country.

Then, brothers, let us go forward, protest, weep, knock at the doors of the high and mighty of this earth, complain, demand, solicit, die if necessary, as our countrymen died; for Hellenism has had the great mishap to have obtained, after much spilling of blood and immense sacrifices, only a part of its national renaissance.

I invoke on you the blessing of our Lord, and may He grant the deliverance of our people.

Signed,

The Archbishop of Amassia and Samsoun,

GERMANOS.

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